

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 04801 01 OF 02 272010Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9729

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EGEN, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: EC MEMBERSHIP: PRE-HOLIDAY ACTIVITY PEAKS

REF: (A) LONDON 4363 (B) LONDON 2943

1. SUMMARY: ACTIVITY ON EC FRONT REACHED A NEW HIGH

MARCH 26 AS LABOR PARTY, GOVERNMENT, TRADES UNION CONGRESS

(TUC) AND PRO-MARKETEERS ALL RACED TO TIE UP LOOSE ENDS

BEFORE BEGINNING TRADITIONAL EASTER HOLIDAYS. LABOR

PARTY'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC) ACHIEVED ONE

OF ITS UNIQUE, COMPLEX COMPROMISES WHICH ALLOWED BOTH

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PAGE 02 LONDON 04801 01 OF 02 272010Z

PRO- AND ANTI-MARKETEERS TO CLAIM VICTORY AND PAPERED

OVER THE GROWING FISSURE IN THE PARTY. GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS APPARENTLY BEEN ABLE TO STEM RISING ANTI-MARKET TIDE IN PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP), PUBLISHED REFERENDUM BILL CONTAINING THREE SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURES FROM WHITE PAPER, AND ANNOUNCED ITS TIMETABLE FOR PARLIAMENTARY ACTION ON EC QUESTION. TUC EXECUTIVE MEETING, WHICH PRO-MARKETEERS HAD HOPED WOULD LEAD TO RECONSIDERATION OF TUC'S ANTI-EC POSTURE, PRODUCED ONLY REAFFIRMATION OF ITS EARLIER POSITION. FINALLY, "BRITAIN IN EUROPE," THE PRINCIPAL PRO-EC UMBRELLA GROUP LED BY HOME SECRETARY ROY JENKINS AND INCLUDING HIGH LEVEL PARTICIPATION FROM ALL MAJOR PARTIES, FORMALLY KICKED OFF ITS CAMPAIGN. WHILE THE ANTI-MARKETEERS STILL HAVE THE INITIATIVE, PRO-EC FORCES ARE BEGINNING TO MOVE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE NEC, IN MARATHON SIX-HOUR MEETING, CAME UP WITH PACKAGE OF CONFLICTING, IF NOT CONTRADICTORY, RESOLUTIONS MARKET GROUPS TO CLAIM VICTORY. NEC APPROVED STRONG ANTI-EC RESOLUTION STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY IAN MIKARDO (REF A), BUT DELETED MOST OFFENSIVE PART OF MIKARDO'S RESOLUTION AND SOFTENED OTHER PORTIONS. NO FORMAL VOTE WAS TAKEN, AS ANTI-MARKETEERS HAD CLEAR MAJORITY AND THERE WAS CONSENSUS THAT THE NUMBERS GAME WOULD BE UNNECESSARILY DIVISIVE. NEC THEN DECIDED NOT TO SUBMIT MIKARDO RESOLUTION TO APRIL 26 SPECIAL LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE, BUT TO CIRCULATE IT TO ALL CONSTITUENCY PARTIES. IT THEN APPROVED A MODERATE STATEMENT DRAFTED BY PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY HAYWARD, WHICH, INTER ALIA, REITERATED THAT ALL LABOR PARTY MEMBERS WOULD BE ALLOWED COMPLETE FREEDOM OF CHOICE ON EC ISSUE, AUTHORIZED PARTY MACHINERY (TRANSPORT HOUSE) TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO BOTH PRO- AND ANTI-GROUPS AND SIMPLY STATED NEC'S OPPOSITION TO NEGOTIATED TERMS. THIS STATEMENT WILL SERVE AS AGENDA FOR SPECIAL CONFERENCE. ON EC MEMBERSHIP ISSUE IT STATES: "THE NEC BELIEVES THAT THE TERMS, AS RENEGLIATED, DO NOT SATISFY BRITAIN'S REQUIREMENTS AND THEREFORE OPPOSES BRITAIN'S CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP IN COMMON MARKET AND SO ADVISES THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE". BOTH PRIME MINISTER WILSON AND ANTI-EC GROUP SUBSEQUENTLY CLAIMED THE NEC'S ACTIONS REPRESENTED GAINS FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS.
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PAGE 03 LONDON 04801 01 OF 02 272010Z

3. GOVERNMENT HAS APPARENTLY BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN PREVENTING FURTHER PLP SUPPORT FOR ANTI-MARKET EARLY DAY MOTION (REF A). PRESS REPORTS SUPPORT FOR THIS MOTION REMAINS AT 140, 134 PLP MEMBERS AND 6 ULSTER UNIONISTS. GOVERNMENT ALSO PUBLISHED TEXT OF REFERENDUM BILL MARCH 26. BILL CONTAINS THREE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM REFERENDUM WHITE PAPER (REF B). GOVERNMENT AGREED TO PERMIT

FREE VOTE ON REFERENDUM VOTE TALLY QUESTION, AND STATED ITS WILLINGNESS TO HAVE VOTE COUNTED BY COUNTY RATHER THAN ON NATION-WIDE BASIS. PROPOSED REFERENDUM QUESTION HAS BEEN AMENDED BY ADDITION OF PARENTHETICAL PHRASE "(COMMON MARKET)" FOLLOWING "EC", WHICH ANTI-MARKETEERS BELIEVE WILL HELP THEIR CASE. FINALLY, GOVERNMENT WILL DISBURSE UP TO 125,000 POUNDS TO REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONS, A CONSIDERABLE DECREASE FROM ORIGINAL PROPOSAL. GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED FOLLOWING SCHEDULE FOR EC DEBATE: APRIL 7-9 DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT'S RECOMMENDATION THAT BRITAIN STAY IN; AND APRIL 10, DEBATE SECOND READING OF REFERENDUM

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PAGE 01 LONDON 04801 02 OF 02 272019Z

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BILL. BOTH DEBATES WILL CONCLUDE WITH VOTES, THE FIRST ON A MOTION TO ENDORSE THE GOVERNMENT'S RECOMMENDATION AND THE SECOND ON A MOTION TO PROCEED WITH THE SECOND READING OF REFERENDUM BILL.

4. MARCH 26 TUC EXECUTIVE MEETING REVEALED NO WILLINGNESS TO RECONSIDER EARLIER CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS OPPOSING CONTINUED BRITISH MEMBERSHIP IN EC. PRO-MARKET FORCES HAD HOPED POSTAL UNION LEADER TOM JACKSON WOULD CALL FOR SPECIAL CONFERENCE TO CONSIDER MEMBERSHIP IN LIGHT OF RENEGOTIATED TERMS, BUT HE EVIDENTLY DID NOT OFFER SUCH A MOTION. FOLLOWING THE EXECUTIVE MEETING, TUC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 04801 02 OF 02 272019Z

GENERAL SECRETARY LEN MURRAY TOLD THE PRESS THAT A SPECIAL CONFERENCE WAS UNLIKELY AND REITERATED TUC'S OPPOSITION TO THE PRINCIPLE OF BRITISH MEMBERSHIP.

5. PRO-MARKEETERS FORMALLY OPENED THEIR CAMPAIGN MARCH 26 WITH FORMATION OF "BRITAIN IN EUROPE" COMMITTEE. HOME SECRETARY ROY JENKINS PRESIDES OVER THIS ALL-PARTY UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION. COMMITTEE VICE PRESIDENTS INCLUDE: WILLIAM WHITELAW (DEPUTY LEADER, CONSERVATIVE PARTY); REGINALD MAUDLING (CONSERVATIVE PARTY SHADOW FONMIN); JO GRIMOND (FORMER LEADER LIBERAL PARTY); CLEDWYN HUGHES (CHAIRMAN, PLP); EDWARD HEATH (FORMER CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER AND PM); LORD FEATHER (FORMER GEN. SECRETARY TUC); SHIRLEY WILLIAMS (PRICES SECRETARY); AND SIR HENRY PLUMB (NATIONAL FARMERS UNION). AT KICK-OFF PRESS CONFERENCE JENKINS PROMISED A VIGOROUS PRO-EC CAMPAIGN AND STATED: "WE ARE UNITED IN BELIEVING THAT BRITAIN'S CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP IN THE EEC ON THE TERMS WHICH EMERGED FROM THE DUBLIN SUMMIT IS OF OVERWHELMING NATIONAL INTEREST, AND THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP WILL PROVIDE ALL OF US WITH A GREATER FRAMEWORK OF FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY WITHIN WHICH TO PURSUE EFFECTIVELY THE DIFFERENT POLICIES WE ADVOCATE ON OTHER ISSUES".

6. COMMENT: NEC DECISIONS WERE SUCCESSFUL DAMAGE LIMITATION EXERCISE, BUT CANNOT REALISTICALLY BE CONSIDERED WILSON "VICTORY". ANTI-MARKEETERS' CONTROL OF NEC GIVES THEM GREAT POWER TO INFLUENCE CONSTITUENCY PARTIES AND SPECIAL CONFERENCE, THOUGH IT IS CLEAR THAT NEC MAJORITY WISH TO AVOID A DIRECT PARTY/GOVERNMENT CONFRONTATION. ON BALANCE WE MUST AGREE WITH ANTI-MARKEETER JOAN LESTOR WHO TOLD EMBOFF THAT WHILE WILSON MAY CLAIM VICTORY, ANTI-MARKET GROUP SCORED CLEAR WIN OVER GOVERNMENT AT NEC MEETING. TRANSPORT HOUSE OFFICIALS WERE ESPECIALLY PLEASED THAT NEC DECIDED PARTY EMPLOYEES WOULD HAVE SAME

FREEDOM AS LABOR MPS AND WOULD SERVICE BOTH SIDES DURING REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN. THIS DECISION, HOWEVER, IS SUBJECT TO RATIFICATION/BY SPECIAL PARTY CONFERENCE. REFERENDUM BILL AND PARLIAMENTARY TIMETABLE CONTAINED NO SURPRISES. WE ANTICIPATE COMMONS WILL ENDORSE ACCEPTANCE OF RENE-GOTIATED MEMBERSHIP TERMS BY AT LEAST TWO-TO-ONE MAJOR-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 04801 02 OF 02 272019Z

RITY AND THAT REFERENDUM BILL WILL PASS FIRST VOTE WITH RELATIVE EASE NOW THAT GOVERNMENT HAS COMPROMISED ON VOTE TALLY ISSUE. PROSPECTS THAT HOUSE OF LORDS WILL ATTEMPT TO DELAY REFERENDUM LEGISLATION APPEAR TO BE DIMINISHING. RESULTS OF THE TUC MEETING WERE ANOTHER SETBACK FOR THE PRO-MARKETEERS, BUT IT IS NOT YET CLEAR HOW ACTIVELY THE TUC WILL CAMPAIGN. THE PRO-MARKETEERS' CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO BE OFF TO A STRONG, IF SOMEWHAT TARDY, START. THEY WILL BE SEEKING TO REGAIN THE INITIATIVE WHICH WAS LOST TO THE ANTI-MARKETEERS FOLLOWING WILSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION.

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